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For a public international relations

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MIND THE GAP¹

Social science is public not just in the sense that its findings are publicly available or useful to some group or institution outside the scholarly world. It is public in that it seeks to engage the public in a process of dialogue ... it cannot seek to stay within the boundaries of the specialist community while studying the rest of society from outside. Robert Bellah, *Habits of the Heart* (1985).

The end of the Cold War may have been a tragedy for some² but for the discipline of International Relations (IR) it represented the onset of the boom years. So long constrained, both theoretically and empirically, by the stranglehold of the Cold War and its Anglo-American monopoly on methods, concepts and analytical frameworks, the multiple openings of the past decade and a half have served, in many ways, to enrich the study of world politics. A broadening out of what is considered to be the legitimate terrain of International Relations has helped to generate an interstitial opening in which novel frameworks, concepts and issue areas have appeared, many of them extremely productive. At the same time, the surge of public interest in international relations – albeit more in lieu of its subject matter than its disciplinary apertures – has seen a major roll out in new courses and programmes. As the world has gone global and politics has gone international, so IR has cashed in.

And yet, as the discipline has responded to the openings of the post-Cold War era, so deficiencies with its theoretical, analytical and conceptual frameworks have become striking. This is hardly surprising – the rapidity of change in the contemporary world precludes easy analysis. Yet, albeit with some notable exceptions listed below, it is troubling quite how incapable much of the discipline has been at speaking to the imminent range of puzzles, questions and problems posed by the hows, whys and wherefores of the contemporary conjuncture: the extent to which the essential grammar of world politics has been disturbed by the shift in the political imaginary from Westphalia to multiple, often deterritorialised, political spaces (although see Ruggie, 1993; Cerny, 1995; Buzan and Little 2000), from superpower competition to American imperium (although see Barkawi and Laffey, 1999; Cox, 2001; and Ikenberry, 2004), and from a discussion of material capabilities to relative intangibles such as religion (although see Petito and Hatzapoulos eds., 2003), race (although see Shilliam, 2006; Hobson, 2007) and culture (although see Walker, 1990; Lapid and Kratochwil eds., 1996; Etzioni 2004).³

Rather than embracing these deep rooted challenges, IR has largely sought to contain them within existing paradigms and problem-fields. This has contributed to a knock-on effect in which precious few IR theories, old or new, speak effectively to emerging issues which move away from existing paradigmatic frontiers: the rise in ethnic conflict (although see Gagnon, 2006), the dangers of democratisation (although see Mansfield and Snyder, 2005), the emergence of jihadism (although see Halliday, 2005) or the influence of neo-conservatism (although see Williams, 2005). Even when IR has succeeded in breaking out of internecine debates about polarity, balancing and the like, it has tended to abandon its primary toolkits. Hence, the analysis provided by John Mearsheimer and Stephen Walt (2006, 2007) about the overbearing role of an ‘Israeli lobby’ in the shaping of US foreign policy may have been many things – but rooted in realism does not appear to be one of them.⁴

There are a number of reasons why IR has struggled to keep pace with the uncertain landscape of the post-Cold War era: the stickiness of Cold War problem fields and approaches; the speed to which cognate disciplines have colonised turf one might reasonably expect to be occupied by IR (globalisation, empire, and war being some of the more obvious examples); the elevation of theoretical and metatheoretical debates in IR over empirical and substantive engagements (Brown, 2006); the continued attachment to systemic-level theories, whether Waltzian, Wendtian or Buzanian;⁵ and the tendency of the new breadth of IR to foster disciplinary fracturing and tribalism. All too often analytical and conceptual frameworks have led to empirical short circuits, or worse, to their abandonment when confronted by the world of ‘actually existing international politics’. Even as IR has increased in popularity and seen its agenda broadened, so the discipline has struggled to speak to the world within which it is situated and which it is charged to study.

Interestingly, there is another discipline which has faced similar travails in recent years – sociology. And it may be that the debate within sociology about what to do about the dissonance between professional development, empirical work and normative engagement may offer some useful pointers as to how IR can reconnect with the post-Cold War landscape. The first part of this article looks at attempts by some figures in sociology to reconfigure the discipline as ‘public’. The second part examines in more depth what this project entails and what it precludes, highlighting three pathologies that a public academic enterprise needs to avoid. The third section outlines some basic tenets – amounting to a manifesto of sorts – for a public International Relations. A brief conclusion summarises the argument and suggests ways to take this agenda forward.

A PUBLIC SOCIOLOGY

The call to make academic enquiry more relevant to the world in which it is situated is hardly new. Indeed, each generation appears to recognise the dangers of an ivory towered cocooning of the intellectual imagination. Hence, the presidential address to the fifth American Political Science Association by James Bryce (1909:4-5) nearly 100 years ago warned that,

All the general propositions and leading principles of politics get their significance and value from their illustrations in concrete. When severed from these they become not only comparatively lifeless but also less helpful, because we do not grasp their direct application ... Some writers have tried to treat it (political science) as a set of abstractions ... following the methods of metaphysics and keeping as far from the concrete as possible. So much time and toil have been spent on these discussions, but what have they given us of substantial worth?

Similar statements have been issued by senior figures in US sociology throughout the post war period: in 1946, Carl Taylor (1947:8), President of the American Sociological Association (ASA), warned that ‘it takes graduate students five to ten years to recover from what happens to them on their graduate training’; in 1963, Everett Hughes (1963:890), also President of the ASA, argued that, ‘while professionalisation may raise the competence of some, it also limits creative activity, by denying license (PhD) to some who let their imagination and their observations run fair afield and by putting candidates for their license so long into a straightjacket that they never move freely again’; in 1968, Martin Nicolaus famously berated both his fellow panellist (Wilbur Cohen, Secretary for Health, Education and Welfare) and the broader membership of the ASA for favouring ‘fat cat’ and ‘jet set’ sociology which was unable to speak to the wider milieu within which sociologists worked; nearly a decade later, the presidential address to the ASA by Alfred McClung Lee (1976) entitled ‘sociology for whom?’ lamented the broad habitualisation of both sociology and sociologists into a professional enterprise which was becoming increasingly distanced from its field of enquiry.

Over recent years, there has been a renewed attempt within sociology to reconnect the discipline with its original vocation, ‘searching for order in the broken fragments of modernity’ as Walter Benjamin famously described the task of the angel of history. Indeed, the former president of the ASA, Michael Burawoy, has argued in numerous texts (2004, 2005a, 2005b, 2005c, 2006; see also Gans, 1989; Blau and Smith eds., 2006) that sociology has become tamed and disciplined, immersed in a ‘fractology’ which has seen it lose its triple engagement – at once theoretical, empirical and normative – with the ambivalences of

modernity. Burawoy argues that the principle *raison d'être* of sociology is its defence of modernity's losers rather than the lauding of its victors. As such, sociologists should study social ruptures and dislocations not just in the abstract but with an overt commitment to grounded research and to the possibility of progressive change. For Burawoy, although it is possible to recall many public sociologists from both the past and the present who considered this ethos as their main motivation – from Marx, Weber, Durkheim, Tocqueville and Tönnies to W.E.B. Du Bois, Pitrim Sorokin, David Riesman, Robert Bellah, Daniel Bell, C. Wright Mills, Raymond Aron, Pierre Bourdieu, Alain Touraine, Charles Tilly, and Michael Mann – there has been a sense of a decline in the sociological imagination which would have been familiar to at least one of these scholars (Mills, 1959) some fifty years ago.

The debate over public sociology has been extensive (see, for example, special issues devoted to the subject in *Social Forces*, 2004; the *British Journal of Sociology*, 2005; *American Sociologist*, 2005; and *Critical Sociology*, 2005). Critics vary their charges: there is uncertainty about the autonomy of any sociological (Calhoun, 2005; Ericson, 2005; Ghamari-Tabrizi, 2005), or disciplinary (Braithwaite, 2005; Hall, 2005; Aronowitz, 2005) division of labour; broader questions about whether public sociology constitutes a discrete field of enquiry (Urry, 2005); charges of arrogance (Tittle, 2004); and complaints about fostering activism by the back door (Nielsen, 2004). Some of these critiques hit home. It is self-evidently the case, for instance, that academic research is inherently public, communicated as it is via multiple public channels whether these be academic, media or policy-oriented. In addition to this, there are well-rehearsed difficulties in delineating what should be considered 'progressive', in valorising activism (Shaw and Walker, 2006), or in romanticising civil society (Calhoun, 2005). Much of civil society is, in fact, fairly uncivil: terrorist networks, paedophile rings and racist organisations enjoy the capacity to organise and mobilise outside state control at least as much as Amnesty, Greenpeace and Jubilee 2000.⁶ Linked to this, some elements of the public academic enterprise may be fairly unpleasant: Charles Murray's *The Bell Curve* and Samuel Huntington's *Who are We?* communicated their ideas very successfully to diverse publics, but neither could be considered in any way 'progressive'.

In many ways, the debates prompted by the move to public sociology are a return to the arguments first mooted by Max Weber (in Gerth and Mills, 1991) nearly one hundred years ago, most notably in his 1918 lecture, "Science as a Vocation". Weber made the case for demarcating between value-orientations and academic enquiry, or between adopting political positions and conducting scholarship. As such (1991:145-6),

To take a political stand is one thing; to analyze political structures and party positions is another. When speaking in a political meeting about democracy, one does not hide one's personal standpoint; indeed, to come out clearly and take a stand is one's damned duty ... It would be an outrage, however, to use words in this fashion in a lecture or in the lecture-room ... the true teacher will beware of imposing from the platform any political position upon the student, whether it is expressed or suggested. 'To let the facts speak for themselves' is the most unfair way of putting over a political position to the student.

For Weber, although there is a relatively thin line between 'science' (academic enquiry) and 'politics' (activism, broadly conceived), the dutiful educator ensured that their role as an engaged citizen did not impede on their vocation as a scholar. In this sense, Weber is making a crucial point – that academic research should be understandable, explicable and defensible on a basis regardless of value orientation and subjective perspective. As such, although value commitments can never be completely removed from the object of research, objectivity is made plausible via the construction of ideal-typical forms of knowledge which mediate between normative engagements, conceptual frameworks and empirical situations (Jackson, 2007). As such, Weber is suggesting that there are standards to which scholarly work must subscribe (of research design, analytical validity, empirical veracity and the like) which can be assessed without the need for shared ethical inclinations.

The sense of a public academic enterprise being advocated here need not detract from this sense of "Weberian objectivity" (Jackson, 2007). Indeed, it is worth emphasising the sense of autonomy which derives from such an understanding of professional academic research (Scott, 2005). Most academics enjoy a relative freedom over what they study, think and write which is drawn, at least in part, from the independence of the academy itself. It may be that this dimension of speaking truth(s) to power isolates academics in fortified, sometimes cloistered, ivory towers, but it also offers them a sense of freedom which enriches certain features of academic life. Advocates of public sociology do not deny this point. Rather, they argue that the two principal strands of public sociology – traditional public sociology which frames matters of high public importance, and organic public sociology which is embedded in thick local publics – produce an essential dialogue which can act as a formative influence on the discipline and the academy as a whole. In a time of relative consensus and conservatism – at least when it comes to questions about the management of economies or the capacity of politics to radically reshape people's lives – public sociology grounds and underpins professional and policy sociology, providing a sense of engagement without which the profession would have little meaning, slight moral authority and few

connections to the students and wider publics who are attracted both to the subject and its subject matter. Public sociology, it is argued, forms an essential role in reconnecting professional sociology with the passion of public engagement, while at the same time offering a defence of civil society and progressive social movements which hardwires in a protective umbilical cord between sociology as an academic pursuit and the various publics within which it is implanted and with which it shares a responsibility of engagement. This is not about the reduction of all such academic enquiry to the level of either political punditry or overt activism. Rather, it speaks to the heart of the scholarly vocation: the communication and critique of areas of knowledge which derive from value-commitments and yet which retain a focus on conceptual, analytical and empirical rigour (Jackson, 2007).

Certainly, the idea of public sociology appears to contain several attractive elements. First, it offers the chance to provincialize the Anglo-American academy in important ways (Quah, 2005), leading us to treat with caution claims based on the universalisation of particular histories, contexts and cultures. Indeed, just opening the door to public sociology means recognising how sociology varies in form and content around the world – in countries such as Brazil, Mexico and South Africa, for example, there is almost nothing except public sociology (Baiocchi, 2005; Burawoy 2004b). Second, a public academic enterprise unites the world of academic study with what Amitai Etzioni (2005) refers to as the era of ‘popular modernity’ in which social movements, produced by increasingly dense state-society penetration, become the central outlet for political expression. As such, it offers insights into the world of ‘actually existing politics’ which helps to keep research both grounded and meaningful. Third, a public academic enterprise helps us move away from conceptual abstractions, for example the trinitarian division of state, society and market representing the frontiers of politics, sociology and economics respectively, which can easily become reified into analytical containers and, thereby, into ontological distinctions (Rosenberg, 1994). The hold of these concepts produces a bracketing off of particular areas of study and engenders a sense of hierarchy in which status is conferred on those seen to be looking at a discipline’s core, a move which is just as problematic within disciplines as between them. In IR, for example, the fetishisation of anarchy, Westphalia, sovereignty, the balance of power and other such concepts has produced a disciplinary structure in which some areas of study are considered more central than others. These others are subsequently left to appear as cutting edge (at best) or as peripheral (at worst). Either way the result is the same – marginalisation.

THREE PATHOLOGIES

Although the debate surrounding public sociology is still very much being played out, it may be that there are important lessons from these discussions which can be gleaned for IR. But why prefer a ‘public’ IR to any other means of re-affirming and re-imagining the discipline? After all, there is a broad sense of malaise about the capacity of the discipline to cope effectively with the vagaries of the post-Cold War world. Equally, there are no shortage of responses about how to fill the gap between paradigms and practice, methods and substance, theory and history. Of these, perhaps the three most prevalent are the call to make IR more ‘policy relevant’, the desire to extend IR’s openness to other disciplines, and to seek a higher public profile for the discipline. Before moving on to outlining the parameters of a public International Relations, therefore, it is worth clarifying how this particular project is distinct from these other responses – the valorisation of philosopher kings, the pursuit of interdisciplinarity, and the development of IR-receptive public intellectuals. Although there may be occasional overlaps between these three arenas and a public IR, the distances between them both tease out the distinctiveness of public IR and illustrate ‘three pathologies’ that the enterprise would do well to avoid.

Philosopher kings?

It would be easy to see public IR as a venture closely associated with the world of the mandarin. After all, if academics want to be more relevant, grounded and meaningful, then what better way to do so than by influencing policy making? Also confusing this issue are the regular calls which deplore the increasing disconnection between policy making and the wider academy (Wallace, 1992; George, 1993; Walt, 2005). Where once, it is argued, a transmission belt acted as a fluid carrier for the transfusion of academic ideas into policy, now this process has become stilted and uneven. This shift has occurred for a number of reasons. First, the heightened professionalisation of the academic career. Tenure track in the US, the RAE in the UK as well as numerous other processes have tended to generate a poppy field syndrome of publishers, journals and institutions which homogenise what is considered to be high quality research. The result is the generation of private languages, fragmentation and factionalism (Abbott, 2001) in which academic tribes rarely venture out of their self-insulated house-arrest.⁷ This process has produced a striking disengagement with policymaking, particularly in the United States where the rise of game theory, an approach

which relies on simulating perfect information, removing context and simplifying reality, has made much academic work unsuited to a world of policy filled with complexity, indeterminacy and imperfection (Walt, 2005).

Perhaps more important than professional disengagement, however, is the question of the sharpness of the distinction between the two worlds occupied by academics and policy makers. First, there is the question of time – while academics work in long-hand and in the long-term, policy makers are concerned with the short-hand and the short-term.⁸ Stephen Krasner (2005), discussing his move from Stanford professor to Director for Policy Planning at the State Department, sees this as one of the most important distinctions between academia and policy making. Politicians simply do not have the time, even if they have the will, to read, analyse and engage in any detail with academic debates, let alone read the innumerable papers and books devoted to specialist topics. This is the world of the executive summary running up against the world of interminable throat clearing. Both suffer from their own tyranny: short-termism and the confinements of the politics of the possible for the policy maker; the ivory tower and faddism for the academic.⁹

The crucial point is that, even when policy makers and academics are working on the same topic, their approaches to the issue are usually quite distinct. Hans Morgenthau (1970:14) understood this point well, ‘the intellectual lives in a world that is separate from that of the politician. The two worlds are separate because they are oriented towards different ultimate values ... truth threatens power, and power threatens truth’. In reality, professional politicians are surrounded by a protective belt of specialist advisers and public servants who act as filters on information, adopting explanations which fit with their policy prescriptions while ignoring those which appear to be contradictory. Indeed, as David Mosse (2004) argues, the ignorance of policy makers is structural rather than inadvertent. When intellectuals light up certain aspects of the policy making process via shorthands such as globalisation, sustainability, soft power and the like, policy makers often fix policy around these master themes. But when more inconvenient facts emerge – that democratisation is dangerous, or that terrorist networks cannot be fought as if they were sovereign states – then these truths are less likely to feed into policy strategies. In this sense, the relationship between academia and policy making is contingent and tangential rather than necessarily close – the production of expert knowledge is something of only instrumental interest to the practicing politician. In short, the first best world of speaking to truth(s) occupied by most academics shares neither the same needs nor comparable notions of time as the second best world of speaking to prudence occupied by most policy makers.

Linked to this are the separate cultures within which academics and policy makers operate (George, 1993). While academics often seek to squeeze history and empirical evidence into their grand schemas, policy makers tend towards *ad hoc* judgements, carrying with them a range of cultural practices ranging from cognitive dissonance to threat inflation (Jervis, 1976; Balzacq and Jervis, 2004), and a set of political constraints which are far more influential in their decisions than the advice of outside ‘impartial’ observers.¹⁰ As such, although academics may be able to help with background specialist information (such as regional expertise or issue area knowledge), or with the provision of analytical frameworks (such as the theory of nuclear deterrence, the democratic peace, or the conceptual apparatus provided by globalisation), these are little more than loose maps within which the decision maker is left to construct substantive policies (Nincic and Lepgold eds., 2000). In other words, academics may be able to establish a context and range of possibilities within which policy can be carried out. But the act of policy making itself is subject to all sorts of pressures and constraints (sometimes described, or derided, as ‘the statesmen’s lament’) which take them away from the ‘purity’ of the academic world. When this division of labour is not recognised, when academics cross over into the world of the philosopher-king, dangerous policies are often not very far behind, witnessed for example by democracy promotion, a set of policies rooted in a particular suite of academic ideas which have been elevated into a number of ideological and, at times, utopian political commitments (Lawson, 2008).

To be engaged in public academia, therefore, is not the same as making research more policy oriented. In fact, the different worlds that policy makers and academics occupy is no bad thing. While academics have a duty, if they have one at all, to the pursuit of knowledge and, perhaps, to the defence of civil society, politicians and policy makers owe their fidelity to the state. As Steve Smith (1997:511) writes, ‘if academics have failed to be involved in the policy process, it has more to do with a failure to communicate with the public than with a failure to communicate to government’. Connections between these two spheres, when and where they are fruitful, should be occasional and organic. Indeed, just by carrying out their research, academics contribute to policy by framing problems, filling in necessary empirical and conceptual backgrounds, and by providing specialist forms of knowledge. Attempts at forcibly marrying the two worlds are likely both to end in failure and to weaken the other’s autonomy. In order to function optimally, academics require a critical distance from the state. As such, avoiding any *necessary* fusion between theory and policy – the ‘siren song of policy relevance’ (Hill, 1994) – is a core feature of a public academic enterprise.

A necessary interdisciplinarity?

The second pathology to avoid is the notion of public International Relations as *necessarily* involving interdisciplinarity. Interdisciplinarity is a term and a concept, which like International Relations itself, appears to have captured the zeitgeist. Given that so many approaches which speak to the contemporary imagination are trans-disciplinary (post-structuralism and the broader cultural turn), joint-disciplinary (such as gender and ethnic studies), multi-disciplinary (like area studies) or cross-disciplinary (for example, historical, economic or political sociology), it is not surprising that there has been a call by both funding bodies and the wider academy to work beyond the confines of sometimes arbitrary and frequently constraining disciplinary perimeters. This is a move made all the more urgent by the non-disciplinary nature of many of the issues which most engage contemporary students and academics: religion, culture, terrorism, nationalism, globalisation, multiculturalism and so on. Indeed, one celebrated advocate of interdisciplinarity, Immanuel Wallerstein, has chaired a commission which made the case for recasting social science as ‘pluralistic universalism’, akin ‘to the Indian pantheon, wherein a single god has many avatars’ (Gulbenkian Commission, 1996:59-60).

Wallerstein’s (2004) vision of ‘uni-disciplinarity’ is intended as a return to a nineteenth century view of the social scientific enterprise, a time before disciplines sought the relative autonomy and security which flowed from establishing discrete disciplinary edges. As such, his call – for a renewed general engagement with the ambivalences of modernity – certainly overlaps with some dimensions of a public academic enterprise. But for a myriad of reasons, conflating these two processes would be deleterious to the public academic enterprise. First there is the obvious, although still important, point that interdisciplinarity requires disciplines in the first place (Moran, 2006); indeed, the latter provide a necessary precondition for interdisciplinarity to take place at all. It is difficult to imagine a ‘back to the future’ in which disciplinary boundaries are dissolved. After all, they are reinforced by a cornucopia of surveillance mechanisms: professional organisations, academic journals, the peer review process, funding councils, assessments of research output and so on. This disciplinary and professional separation is not necessarily a bad thing. Although awareness of work in other disciplines is part of the lifeblood of the intellectual imagination, it is unlikely that engagement with the primary turf of other disciplines can ever take place with the same levels of depth or knowledge which specialists bring to a subject. Invariably, it seems, interdisciplinarity entails an attraction to the mainstream of another subject, either delivering

an off-the-shelf reading of a particular debate, or reading instrumentally about a certain issue in a way that precludes understanding of the more interesting terrain which lies beneath the surface (Lawson, 2005a). As such, interdisciplinary researchers often lack the means to arbitrate between rival specialist interpretations, a process Joseph Bryant (2006) describes as 'narrational discordance'. One of the lessons of the last few years of international politics, both for government and academics, is that specialist knowledge of an area, issue or language (such as the Middle East, Iraq or Arabic) generates a depth of understanding which no generalist can match. In this sense, it is worth recognising that the social sciences constitute a single family in which some relations, such as that between sociology and anthropology, are unnecessarily fractured, it is also worth remembering that other subjects are more distant cousins, often for sound reasons. Forms of specialist knowledge tend to take place away from the surface level debates occupied by interdisciplinary researchers. But that does not make these forms of expertise any less valuable. Just as General Practitioners do not conduct heart by-pass operations, hysterectomy's and neurological procedures, so matters of specialist importance are likely to be beyond the purview of those engaged in interdisciplinary rock-skimming exercises.

The issue of interdisciplinarity is a particularly acute one for International Relations. As Barry Buzan and Richard Little (2001) point out, IR has a semi-permeable membrane which allows ideas from other disciplines in, but blocks substantive traffic out. As politics has gone international, so researchers from outside IR have sought to occupy turf one might expect the discipline to inhabit. Indeed, figures as diverse as Noam Chomsky, Niall Ferguson and Slavoj Žižek have a far higher profile than those who inhabit the discipline of IR even on those issues which speak to the heart of contemporary world politics: Iraq, war, the nature and extent of American power etc. As Buzan and Little argue, when the question is posed: what have other disciplines learned from IR, the cupboard is, 'if not quite bare, then certainly not well stocked' (2001:20). Buzan and Little claim that this story of one-way traffic stems from IR's triple confinement behind a Eurocentric ahistoricism which isomorphises the Westphalian moment, a sectoral narrowness which privileges military and political power relations, and an increasing fragmentation into house journals, styles and languages. As they write (2001:31), 'In the end, mainstream IR theory has preferred to think small and narrow rather than big and wide'. If we accept this view of IR (and it does not seem very wide of the mark), then we can gauge a further weakness inherent in interdisciplinarity: its tendency to dissolve into cannibalism. Interdisciplinarity rarely works on a level playing field. More often, it works as a means for one discipline to colonise the turf of another. As such, border

raids become akin to Viking raiding parties with booty carried off in one direction and little to show for it in the other. Indeed, these ‘looting and pillaging raids’ (Mann 1995:555) conjure up an image more akin to intellectual asset stripping than to fertile inter-relationship.

On the one hand, therefore, interdisciplinarity creates opportunities for what Bruce Carruthers (2005) calls ‘constructive misbehaviour’ – a chance for intellectual entrepreneurs to act as translators, borrowing concepts and data from one academic discipline and introducing them into another.¹¹ Such acts of arbitrage, when they are done well, can reduce levels of ‘intellectual autism’ (Steinmetz 2005) – the narrowing of a field under the watchful scrutiny of academic homeland security agents. But it is important not to get too carried away with openness and fluidity both within disciplines and between them. Interdisciplinarity can engender thinness and sloppiness as well as promote depth and rigour. Obscuring root-and-branch differences can serve to make bridge-building enterprises a metaphor for hostile takeovers, a means of amplifying small differences, or of generating intellectual dilettantism. Perhaps more importantly given the context of this essay, interdisciplinarity tends to focus on horizontal connections between academic disciplines rather than fostering deeper vertical relations with broader publics. As such, when the two processes link up, their relationship is likely to be contingent rather than necessary.

Public intellectuals?

The third and final pathology which a public academic enterprise should avoid is that of the cult of the public intellectual. It is often argued that International Relations lacks the same level of public awareness that is enjoyed by cognate disciplines. This is both true and, at least to some extent, problematic. In a survey carried out in 2005 by the British magazine *Prospect*, only one academic working in IR, Fred Halliday, made it into the magazine’s list of 100 leading British public intellectuals. Across the Atlantic, Russell Jacoby (2000), Richard Posner (2002), Todd Gitlin (2006) and others have noted the general decline in significance faced by public intellectuals in the United States, including those who work in and around IR. Although there are some countries – France, Portugal, Brazil, South Africa – where academics cross easily into public life, the concern is that, at a time when the world has gone global and politics has gone international, the level of public unawareness in International Relations makes the subject home to wild conspiracy theories (9/11 as a plot instituted by the US government), and specious oversimplifications (the invasion of Iraq as a war for oil). As John Hall (2005:379) puts it, ‘isolation from society is dangerous, the breeding ground not

just for trivia but also for fantasies of place and power which occasionally have led to dreadful historical actions’.

However, it is questionable whether the answer to this shortcoming is the development and promotion of more IR-receptive public intellectuals. After all, public intellectuals, often operating at the edges of, or outside, the academy, tend to mirror the process carried out by those academics seeking to become more ‘policy relevant’ – providing sound-bites, in this case to the media rather than to policy audiences, about extremely complex issues. As such, they are engaged in an important communicative exercise, but not one which shares any necessary resemblance to the idea of a public academic enterprise. Indeed, fairly often, public intellectuals are either engaged in issues well removed from everyday political action such as ‘thin slicing’ (Malcolm Gladwell), ‘inflectional morphology’ (Steven Pinker) or ‘the parallax view’ (Slavoj Žižek), or speak for a ‘commons’ which they have only rarely encountered (Jeffrey Sachs). To be clear – the point here is not that publics are unable to understand, reflect and act upon complex messages. Indeed, some public intellectuals – Jonathan Meades for example – communicate difficult concepts both clearly and effectively.¹² Moreover, all sorts of dense academic texts – Hardt and Negri’s *Empire* for example – manage to cross over from the deepest reaches of academia into the public domain. In fact, publics appear to be disengaged less by complexity than by the detritus of academic life: unnecessary jargon, interminable navel gazing, narcissistic point-scoring and the like.¹³ Perhaps academics should write two versions of every book: one for an academic audience; the other a more overtly publicly oriented tract. However, as Stephen Chan (2007) notes, there is an additional problem in that the three models of the public intellectual – as high priests of the royal court (Henry Kissinger, Zbigniew Brzezinski, Condoleezza Rice), as ersatz emancipators from prevalent power structures (Václav Havel, Jürgen Habermas), or as activist detectives conducting investigations into the ruinous policies of ‘one’s own side’ (Noam Chomsky, John Pilger) – all fail to engage formatively with the world beyond and outside the West. As such, they are offering a stilted picture of the world concerned with what ‘we’ can do either *to* or *for* ‘them’. Either way, this is a symptom of closure rather than a process of openness, a form of quarantine which seeks to proclaim ‘truth’ from on-high rather than to build ‘truths’ from genuine forms of complex solidarity.

If the central point of a more publicly oriented academic enterprise is the fostering of ties with multiple publics, this is unlikely to be resolved by the emergence of a new generation of media savvy IR public intellectuals. These individuals tend to occupy a terrain some way removed from the level of grounded research demanded by public IR, writing

accessible tracts which sell books, magazines and newspapers but which only tangentially bare a resemblance to the type of research which serves as the leitmotif of a public academic engagement. While the central component of a public academic enterprise is engagement with multiple publics, public intellectuals tend to be populist advocates from ‘on high’. As such, although these two worlds may touch on occasion, any such overlap is likely to be both restricted and partial.

FOR A PUBLIC INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS

If the last section was concerned with what public International Relations is not, this part of the essay begins to lay out more constructive foundations for the enterprise. The central theme underpinning this section, and the drive towards public IR in general, is what Stephen Chan (2003, 2007) calls ‘complex commonality’. Chan’s work on narratology seeks to reveal the inter-subjective ‘trans-intellectual histories’ that can act as a dialogue between peoples and places. In this essay, I treat the idea of complex commonality as an attempt to mediate between particular and universal, understanding that local variations in culture, normative frameworks and experiences across time and space preclude simple universalities, but that this need not entail a valorisation of minor differences. Rather, immersion in various history’s, cultures, normative frameworks and discourses can direct us towards commonalities which, in turn, act as building blocks towards shared normative and political projects. The unevenness of everyday experiences of global structures – capitalism, patriarchy, the states-system and so on – requires neither a flattening of world politics into a toneless homogeneity nor a revelling in simplistic heterogeneity. Indeed, beyond the binary presented by the bludgeon of homogeneity and the kaleidoscope of heterogeneity lies a more complex, intricate story about our global past, present and future. Public IR should be concerned with weaving together this shared narrative into intelligible, if dynamic, commonalities, performing a task close to what Craig Calhoun (2003) calls ‘communitarianism in cosmopolitanism’ or what Seyla Benhabib (2002) refers to as ‘pluralistically enlightened universalism’ – the study of distinct history’s, languages, epistemologies and ways of life in order to generate complex forms of cosmopolitan engagement. This section seeks to fill in this broad rubric via a discussion of the research, teaching, theory, methods, and communicative openings suggested by a public IR.

Grounded research ... and teaching

The first demand of public IR is that it produces, and is produced by, grounded research. In short, this means less time in the ivory-tower and more time engaging with the multiple publics that make up the panorama of world politics. This does not mean the conjuring of a single global demos, whether this be derived from the twin altars of the Washington Consensus or global civil society. After all, there are precious few signs of an emerging global demos, and publics around the world seem ill-disposed to issues, threats and challenges beyond their immediate borders (Halliday 2004). Rather, in a world in which everyday politics is becoming increasingly internationalised, and in which the international is becoming a subsequently thick political space, any engagement with multiple publics must by definition be international. In this sense, Michael Burawoy (2005a) is right that ‘third wave’ public sociology has seen a shift to the international sphere. As such, engagement within the multiple publics which make up international politics is a necessary feature of *any* contemporary public academic enterprise. It follows that it must also be the central thrust of public IR.

The key point is that the direction of this engagement is not just one-way, from grand theory, universal abstractions and methodological strictures to the everyday world of international politics, but one which allows a genuinely two-way interaction between researcher and subject to flow. While this presents its own difficulties – defining the nature, scope and limits of ‘international publics’, taking on the time and expense of engagement with these publics, and allowing publics to speak not just in bit parts but as central actors – the establishment of this dialogic space between academic IR research and the stuff of international politics is the *sine qua non* of public IR. Some examples of this form of research are already in evidence – Stephen Hopgood’s (2006) work on Amnesty International, the research on globalisation and resistance by Louise Amoore (2002), Anna Stavrianakis’ (2006) study of the links between universities and the arms industry, and Patrick Bond’s (2003, 2005) conjoining of academic, political and normative engagements over issues of basic needs in Southern Africa serve as useful cases in point. But these are exceptions rather than the rule – the majority of IR research remains conducted at a relative remove from the events, processes and groups which make up everyday international politics. As such, there is a substantial gap to fill in terms of this form of research.

There are some rudiments of an engagement with ‘everyday’ world politics on which a public IR enterprise could be linked. *Pace* figures such as Michel de Certeau (1988), Henri

Lefebvre (1991), and Erving Goffman (1959), some scholars (for example, Hobson and Seabrooke eds., 2007) are concentrating less on the 10% of the world which represents the exposed tip of world politics than the 90% which lies beneath the surface (Tétrault and Lipshutz, 2005). This may seem an obvious point. After all, precious few political scientists would study democracy merely by voting – all 72 minutes of it that one scholar, Paul Ginsborg (2005), calculates that voters in democracies spend at the ballot box during their lifetimes. And yet, asking questions about ‘who acts’ rather than ‘who governs’ (Hobson and Seabrooke eds., 2007) presents a very different agenda than is normally taken up in IR or IPE. Indeed, inverting the iceberg generates a focus on ‘the art of the weak’ (Goffman, 1959): the subtle and common ways in which everyday acts of subversion and resistance – verbal taunts, subversive stories, rumour and innuendo – are used around the world (Kerkvliet, 2005). Beyond this aspect of everyday world politics are more dramatic processes, for example the ways in which anti-colonial movements take on the language, norms and strategies of colonial powers in order to reveal the contradictions present in metropolitan discourse and action. This process of ‘symbolic ju-jitsu’ (Scott, 1987) is present in both the ‘mimetic challenge’ (Bhabha, 1990) presented by third world revolutionaries and the dystopian visions of Osama Bin Laden and his followers (Lawrence, 2005). As such, it serves as a useful way into areas of study which IR often either fails to fully recognise or seeks to co-opt into pre-existing frameworks.

A focus on ‘everyday’ world politics, already a staple of fields such as post-colonial studies (Darby, 2004; Dutton, 1998), carries the prospect of opening up fertile turf in international studies, most notably in its capacity to weave together a number of apparently disparate trends in the discipline, not least the turn towards the individual subject in normative IR (as witnessed by the increasing attention paid to human security issues, the emergence of the International Criminal Court, or the burgeoning focus on liberal human rights) and a renewed interest in notions of international community and society (see, for example Barry Buzan’s (2004) articulation of interhuman relations as a ‘first order society’). To take a more concrete example, Arlene Tickner’s (2003) work on distinguishing a particularly Latin American IR scholarship reveals a number of intriguing points: that such scholarship tends to neglect hard-and-fast distinctions between international and domestic politics, unsurprising perhaps given the manifold ways in which external forces have affected domestic politics in Latin America; that there is a close relationship between theory and practice in Latin American IR, most notable in the elevation of academics to key political posts; and a lack of attention, again perhaps unsurprisingly, to issues of anarchy. Few theorists

in non-metropolitan parts of the world claim to see anarchy rather than hierarchy – whether hegemonic or imperial – when they look out of the window.

These examples, although hardly widespread and certainly primarily immanent, do provide a sense of the ways in which a public International Relations enterprise could provide some added value to the discipline. Importantly, the need to establish two-way dialogues between scholars and the publics which constitute everyday world politics is not one restricted to research. It is also an important feature of teaching International Relations. The increasing popularity of IR around the world is fairly straightforward to understand. As politics has gone international, so students are becoming increasingly tuned in, both politically and normatively, to what they understand to be the subject matter of IR: human rights, terrorism, environmental issue, ethnic conflict, war, migration, globalisation and so on. Yet frequently, rather than using these engagements as a means of affecting and reflecting upon our teaching, we see them as diversions to be socialised into the discipline, to be given a ‘proper’ framework, to be mapped onto existing problem fields and paradigms (Shaw and Walker, 2006; Eschle and Maignashca, 2006). As such, IR as a discipline is not only missing out from a research-led engagement with international publics, it is also failing to develop its teaching in response to the ways in which students are brought into the subject. All too often, reforming courses becomes the addition of an extra week on ‘new security threats’, the question of how well Iraq conforms to the ‘just war tradition’, or how closely American preponderance corresponds to the predictions of balance of power theory rather than an exercise in how well, and to what extent, the discipline understands the novel ways in which students conceptualise and engage with international politics. As such, a central task of public IR is working out ways in which teaching, as well as research, can build *from* rather than *on* the interests of students attracted to the discipline.

Action guiding theory

A second, and linked, component of public IR is the provision of what Chris Brown (2006) (*pace* Stephen White) calls ‘action guiding theory’. Over recent years, IR theory has become an industry in its own right – indeed one which has outgrown any soubriquet of ‘cottage’. In many ways, this is a progressive step – a more philosophically rigorous enterprise is productive in its own right and can provide firmer foundations for empirical research. And yet, all too often, the search for more theory has led to three barren wastelands: the desire to retain scientific credentials which continue to provide a narrow, overly rigid, sense of

hierarchy within the discipline; a case of philosophical overstretch in which old debates are reinvented apparently *ad infinitum*;¹⁴ and a failure to engage substantively with the substance of world politics itself. In general terms, IR theory has become ‘the new black’ (Brown, 2006). Meta-theoretical debates, the turn to Schmitt, Lakatos and others, and a general rise in methodological awareness are all important dimensions in the opening of IR as a field of study. But to some extent this turn has taken place with a sense of remove from, and occasionally distrust towards, the actual stuff of world politics, providing a tyranny of method over substance which does a disservice to both enterprises.

Public IR, while understanding the need for professionalism and depth in IR theory, takes the enterprise as a means rather than as an end. In other words, theory serves as a means to deepen, broaden and contextualise action-led research rather than operating as an end which subverts the need for empirical research. In this sense, while all IR students and scholars should be aware of broader issues of philosophy and political theory, these areas should not be fetishized or granted a status above that of hands-on research. In a similar vein, the status of star-gazing methodological technicians, particularly in the United States, is of much less utility to public IR than an understanding of what Adam Przeworski (1996) calls ‘methodological opportunism’ – the idea of a research strategy drawn from a particular puzzle or engagement with a substantive field of enquiry. Neither theory nor methods should be imposed on particular subject areas. Nor should they be seen as zero-sum specialisms which remove the need for substantive research. For its part, public IR should eschew any such trade-off, making a concerted engagement with political and normative issues the starting point of its research. Occupying the ‘the eclectic messy centre’ (Evans 1996) of debates about theory and methods generates a research process which is premised in the first instance upon empirical, political and normative engagements with the events, issues and processes which make up the marrow of world politics itself.

Public IR, therefore, is primarily envisaged as occupying turf around middle range theory, embracing complexity, contingency, and context but also examining the ways in which particular experiences conjoin with wider processes across time and place. As a result, public IR tends towards ethnography (e.g. Vaughan, 2005), analytical history (e.g. Hall, 2005), and multiple levels of analysis (e.g. Sartori, 1970) in the generation of conditional generalisations rooted in time and place specificities. If the world is messy, complex and at times, contradictory, then research which finds common patterns, trends and trajectories *from* empirical analysis rather than one which seeks to impose monolithic order *on* historical ambiguities is likely to yield a far richer picture. As such, public IR is rooted in the

substantive application of social relations as they are constituted in time and place, followed by the examination of how far these social processes and social facts are generalisable across both time and space. This brings it into contact with a number of fields of research already prevalent in IR, most notably historical sociology (Lawson, 2006, 2007), which also carry out this type of research. Practical examples on which to build include exploration of how time and space differentiation impacts on general abstractions such as empire (Lieven, 2001; Mann, 2003) and revolution (Halliday, 1999; Lawson, 2005b).

A double engagement

A third dimension of public IR is its concern with normative, politically engaged work. Those working in the field of public IR should recognise that facts are value laden, but that values too are factually embedded. As Heikki Patomäki and Colin Wight (2000) observe, this leads to a simple desire to make values factually explained, and facts subject to critical evaluation. The result is a connection, or perhaps a reconnection, between the world of ethical deliberation and the world of causal processes far removed from the banalities of ‘value-free’ abstract research programmes, ‘orphans of the scientific revolution’ (Puchala, 2003) as they are. In this sense, public IR critiques the way in which much of the contemporary academy, both in IR and beyond, endorses a bureaucratic enterprise which restricts the intellectual imagination, factors out the passion inherent in political contestation, and limits academic research to being an executive arm of the state apparatus. The narrowing of work behind the walls of what is considered to denote a professional academic discipline has served to blind scholars and students to the importance of this double engagement – both political and intellectual – with the essence of world politics. The ‘objectification’ of research, part of the lifeblood of positivism, has hidden the overt, normative engagement with research and politics which was once the cornerstone of classical social science, and which lies at the heart of most public and student engagement with academic enquiry today. A task for public IR is to restore a sense of humanism to the discipline, and in the process, to unite the world of human agency with the apparently impersonal structural forces, and professional blinkers, which serve to constrain research in the field. Public IR aims to take human relations and their crystallisation in historical conditions as its primary area of interest. As such, it promises the study, articulation and representation of ‘we’ rather than ‘they’, or ‘it’.

Public IR, therefore, as well as being concerned with the extent to which notions of value rationality, axiomatic rationality or bounded rationality serve as useful additions to

instrumentality as the building block for IR research, should also take an interest in what is missing from this debate – the world of ‘unreason’. The politics of ‘unreason’ ranges from empathy (as distinct from sympathy) with the articulation of alternative understandings of ‘the international’, to concern with the beliefs and emotions – anger, fear, love – which constitute a politics of commitment. These stimulations to action lie at the heart of international politics – the motivations of suicide bombers, or those who take part in ethnic cleansing and revolutionary movements – and yet which seem to have little in common with the world of instrumental reason. IR still seems caught in a state of myopia towards the numerous psychological research over the last thirty years which has explored the ways in which rationality is, in fact, *dependent* on psychological states such as emotions. As Jonathan Mercer argues (2005:94), ‘emotion precedes choice (by ranking one’s preferences), emotion influences choice (because it directs one’s attention and is the source of action), and emotion follows choice (which determines how one feels about one’s choice and influences one’s preferences)’. Hence, psychological states should be seen less as a means of explaining non-rational mistakes, but more as something deeply woven into the fabric of rationality itself. By draining psychology from rationality, Mercer argues, rational choice approaches collapse into normative *ceteris paribus* statements which rely, unwittingly and without acknowledgement, on what he calls ‘folk psychology’. And as Tarak Barkawi (2004, 2007) makes clear, removing emotions from political choices and imposing ‘our’ views on ‘the other’ of international politics is unlikely to achieve either understanding or explanation of why, for example, young Muslims are willing to lay down their lives for the cause of jihadism. Difficult though this may be, grass roots knowledge, specialist understanding and immersion in the everyday world of international politics help to provide a decoding which, in turn, should yield results which go much deeper than abstracting motives from others which they do not appear to hold for themselves.

Multiple channels of communication

The fourth and final dimension of public IR is to think much more fluidly about the multiple ways in which IR is communicated. Rather than endorsing the homogenisation of what is considered to be the ‘proper’ means of communicating scholarship via niche journals, university presses and other forms of regulated texts, a public IR would be much more open to how communication both with and between international publics and professional researchers takes place. Public discourse carried out via blogs (such as

<http://duckofminerva.blogspot.com/>), e-zines (such as www.opendemocracy.net), online networks (such as global exchange), talks, reports, magazines and other non-peer reviewed publications provide relatively open channels of communication, translation and ‘back translation’ (Buroway, 2005c) which can help to foster a sense of two-way communication between public and academy. It might also be worth considering the important ways in which visual forms of communication could play a greater role in the discipline, for example by exploring more explicit links between visual cultures and IR. The politics department at Goldsmiths, University of London, has recently become home to an artist in residence who is working on multiple projects which open up non-textual dimensions to learning, thinking about and researching international politics. The department has begun to introduce non-textual assessments for its students – including videos and other forms of artwork – in an attempt to demonstrate how international politics is constituted by day-to-day visual interactions as well as by more formalised textual communications. Importantly, these means of transmission move away from a mono-directional imparting of knowledge towards a mutual exchange of views, opening a much wider sense of the world of international relations than is conjured by the discipline to date.

Of course, the prospects of these forms of communication run into immediate obstacles, not least how forms of unconventional intellectual exchange impact on professional processes such as tenure review. It may or may not be the case that scholars such as Juan Cole and Dan Drezner have been rejected for tenure at high-profile universities (Yale and Chicago respectively) because of their blogs, but regardless, it is clear that taking an overt normative stance on a particular issue, or using an alternative forum for displaying these views, is not yet something academic institutions find easy to grasp. Nor does academic activism necessarily translate into successful political interventions. For example, the attempt at “Weberian activism” (Jackson and Kaufman, 2007) instituted by ‘Security Scholars for a Sensible Foreign Policy’ did not make the substantive public impact over the war in Iraq that its signatories envisioned, a failure shared by many other such ventures over previous years and decades. And yet, there are increasing instances in which interventions via unconventional ‘fifth estate’ media are infiltrating mainstream politics, whether this be over the resignation of Trent Lott or the outing of Valerie Plame (Drezner and Farrell, 2004). Over time, it may be that such forms of engagement will help to recast traditional sites of academic gatekeeping (Drezner, 2006). What is clear is that opening up processes of communicative exchange are bound up with deeper social trends – not least debates about partisanship in the media – which are only just beginning to take place.

THE DUAL MANDATE

Public International Relations is not intended to be a new master-category for the discipline. Rather, this essay has sought to open up a space for public IR within the glasnost currently gripping the discipline. It has outlined an enterprise based on complex commonality, grounded research, action guiding theory, political and normative engagement, and multiple channels of communication. Clearly, given the relatively youthfulness of this form of research, this essay has only been able to provide the bare bones of what a more pronounced engagement with public IR would involve. As such, it is an opening – or suggestion – for further debate; researchers will have to decide for themselves ‘how far along the action chain’ (Etzioni, 2005) of public IR they are prepared to go. The key point is to visualise public IR as part of the broader fabric of the discipline rather than as a subaltern option to be seen as second tier, private or marginal. It may be that relatively few students and scholars choose more than a taste from its menu. After all, as noted above, public International Relations runs counter to numerous trends within the discipline – how status is conferred, the tendency to factionalism, and the shortage of time, funds and interest in grass roots research. Nevertheless, public International Relations has potentially important benefits for the discipline as a whole, not least in the ways it can help to reconnect the subject to its students and to the subject matter of the rapidly changing world within which the discipline is embedded, and yet which it often seems content to ignore.

In general, public International Relations represents a step away from cloistered scholasticism towards a more concerted engagement with the multiple publics which constitute everyday world politics. As such, public IR looks outwards rather than inwards, to complexity rather than parsimony, and to concrete research rather than meta-abstractions. Perhaps it is a curse for the current generation of IR scholars and students to live in interesting times, a world of rapid, turbulent and often unsettling changes. But it would be a far greater curse if this time was spent on protracted bouts of navel gazing and on attempts to rescue and revive outdated approaches, paradigms and worldviews, only coming up for air to find that the world has moved on. In this sense, public IR joins part of a wider opening in the social sciences represented by the Perestroika movement in Political Science, the shift towards a post-autistic economics, the move towards public sociology outlined earlier in this essay, as well as the return of a closer relationship between academic work and political

activism as represented by the Caucus for a New Political Science in the United States and the Network of Activist Scholars of Politics and International Relations in the UK (Herring, 2006). These openings signal at least a partial return to what Earl Rubington and Martin Weinberg (2003:361) call the dual mandate, an academic vocation intended ‘to solve social problems as well as to develop disciplines’. Rubington and Weinberg see sociologists as playing four roles: ‘theorist, researcher, applier, and critic’. Until recently, IR has seemed infatuated with just the first of these, with perhaps a side order of the second. In a time of both great opportunity, and also great challenges, for IR, it is time to cast the net wider and to seek a more consolidated engagement with the third and fourth of these challenges, in the process opening up dialogue with the multiple publics which constitute world politics.

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Endnotes

¹ Although I am now based at LSE, this essay is very much borne of my time at Goldsmiths. Indeed, the engagements which lie behind this article reside in numerous conversations with former colleagues at Goldsmiths, most notably Gonzalo Pozo-Martin, Michael Dutton, Sanjay Seth and Jasna Dragovic-Soso. Paul Kirby, Patrick Jackson, Bryan Mabee and Faiz Abuani provided excellent comments on earlier drafts of the piece as did two anonymous IPS reviewers. Primary thanks must go to the students of the BA and MA programmes in International Studies at Goldsmiths. I'm not sure how far along the action chain of public IR many students went – or will go in the future – but if there were doubts, these were rarely made public. For that I am extremely grateful.

² For example, the maverick British politician George Galloway referred to the collapse of the Soviet Union as the 'single biggest catastrophe of my life'. Hattenstone, Simon. September 16, 2002. Saddam and Me: Interview with George Galloway. *The Guardian*.

³ I am not seeking to make the point that these exceptions serve as examples of public IR. To the contrary, my point is that these publications are amongst the best attempts to deal with the multiple openings of post-Cold War IR *without* recasting the enterprise in any kind of 'public' fashion.

⁴ Mearsheimer and Walt argue that the Israeli lobby, an informal alliance of public and private groups and individuals, exercises adverse influence over US foreign policy via a mixture of political pressure, media manipulation and through silencing academic debate. Whether or not readers agree with these conclusions, the analysis provided by Mearsheimer and Walt hardly appears to be a recognisably realist argument, whether classical, structural or neo-classical. For a rebuttal of Mearsheimer and Walt's argument, see Dershowitz (2006).

⁵ The extent to which systemic level theories fail by necessity to capture reality is a point made well by Michael Mann (2006:344): 'there is no singular world system, no singular process of globalisation, no multi-state system dominated by a singular realist logic. History is not the history of class struggles or of modes of production, or of epistemes or discursive formations, cultural codes or underlying structures of thought governing the language, values, science and practices of an era, underpinned by a singular process of power enveloping all human activity. These system theories succeed in capturing theorists, not social reality'.

⁶ This issue is even more thorny when elevated to the international realm. Beyond the question of where one can locate 'global publics', it is difficult to imagine any such sphere without understanding the central part played by states in forming an international public space (Colas, 2002). Contemporary transnational social movements pale in comparison to their nineteenth and twentieth century forbearers – whether socialist, feminist, or revolutionary – in their capacity to transgress borders. And states, whether rightly or wrongly, continue to be the principal sites of representation and accountability in international politics, something many activists seem to acknowledge by their extensive lobbying of influential state actors, often acting as advocacy networks which speak *for* rather than *with* the publics they purport to represent (Chandler, 2004a). Indeed, this 'courtier politics' is, to some extent at least, rooted in a refusal to engage with collective progressive struggles in favour of an agent-less, individualist ethics which sees the international, or global, sphere as a release from the attenuation of political contestation in the West (Chandler, 2004b).

⁷ This process has been intensified by a considerable growth in niche journals. The International Studies Association now produces five official journals aimed at what are considered to be distinct audiences within the discipline, while a growing number of journals are geared for specialist fields, hence the recent emergence of the *Journal of Intervention and*

State Building, and perhaps more strikingly, *Translocations: The Irish Migration, Race and Social Transformation Review*. Linked to this are the emergence of ever increasing specialist groups within professional organisations. The International Studies Association now has twenty-three discrete sections, while the British International Studies Association has fifteen affiliated working groups, many of which have appeared only in the last few years.

⁸ If, as Schopenhauer thought, current events are ‘the second hands of history’, then policy makers work in seconds while academics, in contrast, tend to operate for some of the time in minutes, more frequently in hours, and on occasion in days.

⁹ Edward Said writes forcefully on the tendency of western academics to embrace faddism: ‘cults like post-modernism, discourse analysis, New Historicism, deconstruction, and neo-pragmatism transport academics into the country of the blue; an astonishing sense of weightlessness with regard to the gravity of history and individual responsibility fritters away attention to public matters, and to public discourse ... Western intellectuals choose theoretical positions with about the same effort and commitment required in choosing items from a menu’. In Chan (2007:1).

¹⁰ Often these processes generate their own pathologies. As Philip Tetlock (2005) points out, specialists are actually less good at predicting events in their field as non-experts, having a tendency to over-extrapolate from the past to the future. This is, in many ways, unsurprising. After all, experts are not neutral observers but partisans who have a vested interest in explaining and predicting a certain chain of events. As such, they have an in-built tendency towards motivated bias and groupthink, a point well made thirty years ago by Robert Jervis (1976) and more recently by Michael Freeden (2003).

¹¹ Illustrative examples of fruitful interdisciplinarity include the concept of ‘punctuated equilibrium’, first mooted by the biologist Stephen Jay Gould to describe the switch-points in which long periods of stable reproduction within complex systems are punctuated by short, periods of rapid change. Gould’s concept has been usefully transported into numerous ‘soft’ academic sciences. Another pertinent example is the concept of ‘path dependence’ which originated in economic history and has become used in many disciplines to describe how small initial distinctions are amplified over time, becoming substantial schisms which are then difficult to reverse.

¹² The series on British television which Meades fronted on the architecture of the Third Reich and Soviet Russia is illustrative of the ways in which complex ideas can be translated – often through humour – without sacrificing intellectual content.

¹³ I am grateful to Paul Kirby for stressing this point to me.

¹⁴ For example, much of the debate about theory in IR is a rehash of a much older division between the Austrian School and the German Historical School over scientific method: the *Methodenstreit*. The German Historical School argued that, rather than focusing on universal truisms modelled on *homo economicus*, the line which was pursued by the Austrian School of classical economists, economic processes operated within a social framework which was in turn shaped by cultural and historical forces. Hence, Gustav Schmoller and his associates favoured historical, comparative research that could uncover the *distinctive* properties of particular economic systems. The core debates of the original *Methodenstreit* continue to reverberate around contemporary social science and, in particular, IR: the degree to which people’s actions are shaped by their social, historical and normative contexts as opposed to the view of individuals as universally driven *homo politicus* or *homo economicus*; preferences as exogenously generated by social institutions or the endogenous result of primal drives; rationality as a broad category embracing a range of motivations versus rationality as a narrow, limited realm of utility maximisation.